



**STRATEGY  
RESEARCH  
PROJECT**

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Defense or any of its agencies. This document may not be released for open publication until it has been cleared by the appropriate military service or government agency.

**BATTLE COMMAND-  
WHAT IS IT, WHY IT IS IMPORTANT,  
AND HOW TO GET IT**

**BY**

**LIEUTENANT COLONEL MICHAEL T. HAYES**  
United States Army

**DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A:**

Approved for public release.  
Distribution is unlimited

**19960603 215**



**USAWC CLASS OF 1996**

**U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE, CARLISLE BARRACKS, PA 17013-5050**

**DTIC QUALITY INSPECTED 1**

**USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT**

**BATTLE COMMAND-**

**WHAT IS IT, WHY IT IS IMPORTANT, AND HOW TO GET IT**

by

**Lieutenant Colonel Michael T. Hayes  
United States Army**

**Colonel Herbert F. Harback  
Project Adviser**

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A:  
Approved for public  
release. Distribution is  
unlimited.

**U.S. Army War College  
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013**

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Defense or any of its agencies. This document may not be released for open publication until it has been cleared by the appropriate military service or government agency.

## ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Michael T. Hayes (LTC), USA

TITLE: Battle Command: What is it, Why is it important, and How do we get it

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 15 April, 1996 PAGES: 26 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

Battle command: the commander's ability to think conceptually, analytically, and critically in an uncertain environment to visualize an endstate and articulate this vision to his staff and subordinate leaders. We do not understand or execute effective battle command throughout the force today. Additionally, the Army has not developed a strategy to correct this problem, even though it is a vital component of successful operations. This paper is focused on the tactical leader -- the battalion and brigade commander and their cognitive abilities required to "visualize the terrain, the enemy, himself, and desired endstate, and articulate this vision". There are many factors contributing to battle command failure; poor understanding, personnel turbulence, and little institutional training. The Army is at a crucial crossroads in the development and preparation of its early 21st century brigade and battalion commanders. Without significant, perhaps radical, changes in preparing these leaders with effective battle command skills, our warfighting capability as the leading landpower force will be in jeopardy.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### BATTLE COMMAND:

#### WHAT IS IT - WHY IT IS IMPORTANT - AND HOW TO GET IT

INTRODUCTION.....	1
ENVIRONMENT OF OUR FUTURE LEADER.....	4
BATTLE COMMAND - WHAT IS IT?.....	5
SURVEY.....	9
BATTLE COMMAND VOID IN OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM.....	12
OPERATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS AND EFFECTS ON BATTLE COMMAND.....	15
CURRENT ASSESSMENT OF BATTLE COMMAND.....	16
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	18
CONCLUSIONS -- IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE.....	25

## **BATTLE COMMAND:**

### **WHAT IS IT, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT, AND HOW DO WE GET IT**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

"Battle Command" is receiving a lot of attention these days. Many Army publications and military journal articles attempt to describe battle command and its importance for our future leaders. Despite all of this deliberation, there is little agreement on the precise meaning of battle command, the implications it has for our commanders, or how we get it. So what is battle command? According to FM 100-5 it is:

the art of battle decision making, leading, and motivating soldiers and their organizations into action to accomplish missions. Includes visualizing current state and future state, then formulating concepts of operations to get from one to the other at least cost. Also includes assigning missions; prioritizing and allocating resources; selecting the critical time and place to act; and knowing how and when to make adjustments during the fight.<sup>1</sup>

While the concept of "battle command" may be theoretically clear as you read the doctrine, the intellectual and practical translation of battle command's essence into practicable tactical application remains in question.

This paper will review the concept of battle command, which I have defined as "the commander's ability to think conceptually, analytically, and critically in an uncertain environment, to visualize an endstate and articulate this vision to his staff

and subordinate leaders." I will also argue for its importance and offer a strategy to improve understanding and implementation of this critical subject. It will concentrate on the tactical leader -- the battalion and brigade commander. This level is the center of gravity for battle command. It is here where the commander's actions are directly translated into tactical and operational plans. It is at this level where critical battle command skills essential for senior strategic leaders are developed and refined. Failure to adequately implement battle command at this level results in battlefield disaster, which jeopardize soldiers' lives and the mission. I will focus on the most critical component of battle command -- the cognitive ability of the leader to "visualize the terrain, the enemy, and himself, and desired endstate". This application of the battle command skills will be emphasized because to date, the Army has not stressed such applications, even though it is the most vital component of successful operations.<sup>2</sup> If these skills can be effectively developed and properly executed on the battlefield, they can also be applied to the full spectrum of leader responsibilities, including peacetime training, crisis deployment and re-deployment.

The Army is at a crucial crossroads in the development and preparation of its early 21st century brigade and battalion commanders. Without significant, perhaps radical, changes in preparing these leaders to fully understand and execute battle command, our warfighting capability as the leading landpower force will be in jeopardy.

The following issues are currently contributing to ineffective battle command and will provide the framework for this paper:

-The early 21st century environment, influenced by revolutionary changes in military affairs, will require extremely capable leaders.

-Many leaders do not fully understand battle command. The concept has failed to produce workable tactical applications.

-Battle command is not adequately integrated into the curriculum or taught in the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) school system, thereby adversely effecting preparation of future leaders.

-Our captains and majors are spending less time in operational assignments, thus being deprived of critical experience and learning opportunities.

-The majority of current brigade and battalion commanders are failing to address and execute battle command at the Combat Training Centers.

What follows is a brief historical example of a battle command failure and the impact it had on this particular fight. But these same mistakes are being repeated routinely at our Combat Training Centers today.

At the conclusion of the battle of Antietam on 17 September 1862 the Union Army suffered 12,400 casualties in five unsuccessful attacks. Most significantly, the Union lost an opportunity to annihilate an inferior enemy and perhaps ending the Civil War. Why did this battlefield disaster occur? Many factors contributed to this lost opportunity: lack of coordination among Union forces, inability to mass at the decisive point, missed communications, and inability to execute as planned. While these facts hindered successful operations, the primary cause was the failure of Major General George McClellan to understand and implement Battle Command. His flaws were numerous: no vision of endstate; poor understanding of terrain and its impact on both the Confederate defense and his operation; failure to understand Lee's intentions and strength; and poor appreciation of the Union's capability to assemble, move, and attack. All of this - coupled with his lack of initiative and inability to monitor the fight, making adjustments as needed - points to a complete failure by McClellan to understand the critical components of battle

command, resulting in unnecessary loss of life and failure to accomplish his mission.<sup>3</sup>

To sum up this problem -- Current commanders are not trained to successfully implement battle command -- future commanders are not being sufficiently prepared for command in the 21st century -- and the Army has not developed an overall plan to systematically address the above issues. This paper is intended to highlight the importance of battle command to our Army, generate a call to action, and offer solutions to this situation.

## **ENVIRONMENT OF OUR FUTURE LEADER**

The anticipated environment of the 21st century should cause a shift in our emphasis on battle command. The post-Cold War impact on the world in general and especially the United States is still causing major ripples in how we are developing and implementing our national security policy, military strategy, and force structure. The United States will no longer confront a single threat in a bipolar setting with many close allies at its side, as was the case until 1989. Indeed, the era ahead may offer precisely the opposite of all these circumstances. The U.S. political and military leaders must learn not only how to act differently than during the Cold War but how to think differently as well.<sup>4</sup> Major General Richard Chilcoat captured this idea by stating:

Simultaneous revolutions in military affairs, technology, and information, and a reordering of the international system, have shattered traditional boundaries, merging the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war into a single, integrated universe in which action at the bottom often has instant and dramatic impact at all levels.<sup>5</sup>

This environment we will find in the 2010-2020 period is ambiguous at best. In tomorrow's world, conflict could be triggered by ethnic hatreds, border disputes, conflicting economic agendas, nationalist ideologies, cultural antagonisms, or competitive arms races.<sup>6</sup> What impact will this uncertain, diverse environment have on our future military leaders? It should be clear that this future world will not be "business as usual", and the manner in which our leader development process produces leaders must adapt to this environment. Through this triad of change - enemy, technology, and information - one theme runs constant: the requirement, now more than ever, for a leader who can assimilate multiple sources of critical information, visualize an endstate framed by strategic guidance and his commander's intent, critically formulate many options to his endstate, fully develop a concept to achieve that endstate, and then clearly articulate their plan to those who must carry out the mission. Battle command must focus on this process to develop leaders who are mentally better prepared to operate successfully in a drastically complex, different world than past leaders have dealt with.

#### **BATTLE COMMAND - WHAT IS IT?**

One of the greatest practitioners of battle command was General Robert E. Lee. What follows is a brief example of a leader who understood and successfully implemented battle command.

During the battle of Chancellorsville, 1-4 May 1863, Lee clearly understood the foundation of successful battle command, which resulted from his understanding of and interaction between the terrain, the enemy, his own capabilities, and his vision of the desired endstate.

Through his personal reconnaissance, his cavalry, and information gathered from local informants, Lee understood how the terrain would effect both the Union's and his operation. His knowledge of Hooker's intentions and capabilities allowed him to anticipate where the fight might occur, where to take risks, and how the Union would react to his plans.

Lee was confident in his Confederate forces and in their capabilities to act. This understanding enabled him to visualize the up coming battle in his mind, which he translated into a clear commander's intent shared by his subordinate leaders. Lee split his Army on three separate occasions, made a significant adjustment to his plan during execution, and through confidence, courage, and superior leadership - based on his battle command skills - defeated Hooker's army at Chancellorsville.<sup>7</sup>

Battle command was first introduced to the Army in the 1993 edition of Field Manual 100-5, Operations. It replaced Command and Control as a battlefield function. The change was made as the Army transitioned from a Cold War Army mindset to an approach, that called attention to new dimensions of thinking about the commander and his role in leading soldiers and decision making. The definition of battle command as stated in FM 100-5 clearly describes the concept. The problem comes in trying to connect this concept to a tactical leader's actual conduct of war. There is no document which explains or offers examples of how does he learns this, how he teaches battle command to his subordinates, and then implements it on the battlefield.

A critical doctrinal review reveals that battle command consists of many concepts, components, and characteristics. What follows are key bullets from these doctrinal manuals and highlights the dilemma tactical leaders have with battle command.

-FM 100-5 asserts that leaders must assimilate thousands of bits on information to visualize the battlefield. Thinking and acting are simultaneous activities for leaders in battle. Command means visualizing current and future state of friendly and enemy

forces, then formulating concepts of operations to accomplish the mission.

-TRADOC pamphlet 525-200-1 asserts that battle command incorporates two vital components-the ability to decide and the ability to lead. Both demand skill, wisdom, experience, and courage.

-The commander must know what is important and glean this information he knows to be vital from what is available.

-Battle command is the nucleus around which the other three elements of combat power- maneuver, firepower, and protection - can evolve.

-Commanders must have an intuitive sense of the battle and possess an immediate cognition without evident rational thought and inference. This is born from the range of experiences and reflections from similar occurrences by the commander in the course of his development as a leader.

-Battle Command Battle Lab (draft publication) BATTLE COMMAND asserts that battle command has:

- two vital components: decision making and leadership.

- nine basic tenets: initiative, agility, depth, integration, versatility, flexibility, judgment, intuition, and empathy.

- six dynamics or primary elements: leadership, decision making, information assimilation, visualization, conceptualization, and communication.

- six fundamentals: see the enemy, see the terrain, see yourself, deciding, leading and motivating, and visualization of current and future

end state.

-FM 7-30, The Infantry Brigade, makes the following observations on battle command:

- Battle command is art and science of battlefield decision making and leading soldiers.

- Its basic elements are decision making, leading, and controlling.

- Battle commanders are technically and tactically competent, possess intuition gained through experience, create a vision of unit requirements, and articulate this vision as commander's intent.

The foregoing review indicates our principal doctrinal manuals talk about battle command, but fail to fully describe what it is, why it is important, and how to obtain the essential requirements for effective battle command. The term "battle command" is too broad. When you hear someone mention "battle command" what comes to mind? Is it the orders process, the morale of the soldiers, the capabilities of the leader, the command climate of the outfit, or the organizational design of the operations center? It could mean all of these, as the doctrine indicates. The point that is over looked or not realized by most people is that the essence of battle command must be focused exclusively on the commander's cognitive ability to visualize his mission, understand the interaction between the enemy - terrain - yourself, as he develops the concept. Without this as a basis, none of the other elements of battle command or leadership will matter.

What seems to be missing in all the manuals and articles discussing battle

command are the detailed requirements and critical components the commander must possess and communicate for timely, precise application of battle command.

Specifically, how do we identify and develop the mental ability to visualize, conceptualize, and apply critical thinking skills to an ever changing situation?

Following this assessment, the commander must then assess current capability and analyze the situation or pending battle in his mind, seeking to realize his desired outcome. Before any real progress can be made in understanding and implementing successful battle command, we must first come to grips with the terminology, the doctrine, the leader development, the strategy, and the expectations we require of our commanders. All of this must start in our educational system.

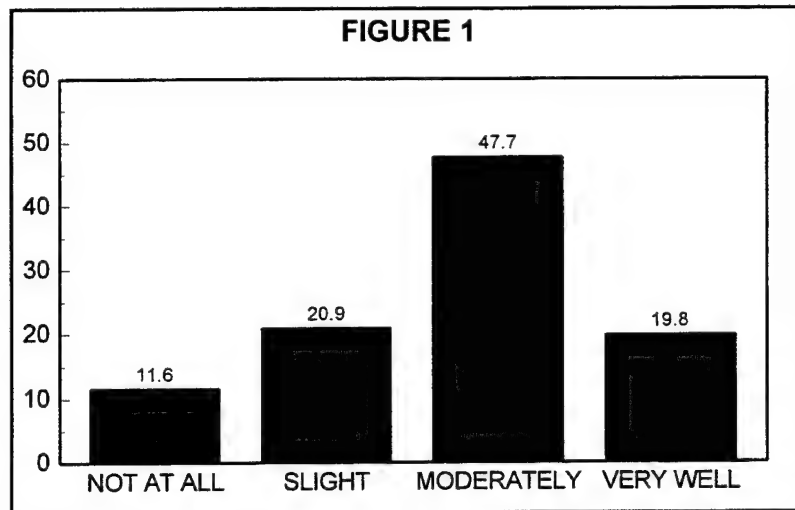
## **SURVEY**

To establish a baseline from which to examine battle command, I developed and distributed a survey focused on three key points. First, I sought to determine the degree of understanding of battle command; second, I wanted to assess how well the Army has done in articulating and implementing battle command; and finally, I sought to determine the importance of battle command to the future leader, to see how such impressions may impact on the TRADOC education system. The survey instrument provided for both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Of the twenty questions, fourteen used numeric scales (multiple choice); the remaining six were opened ended questions.

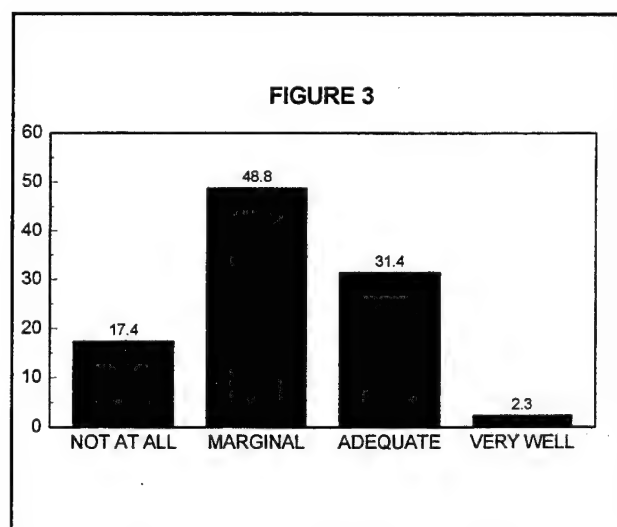
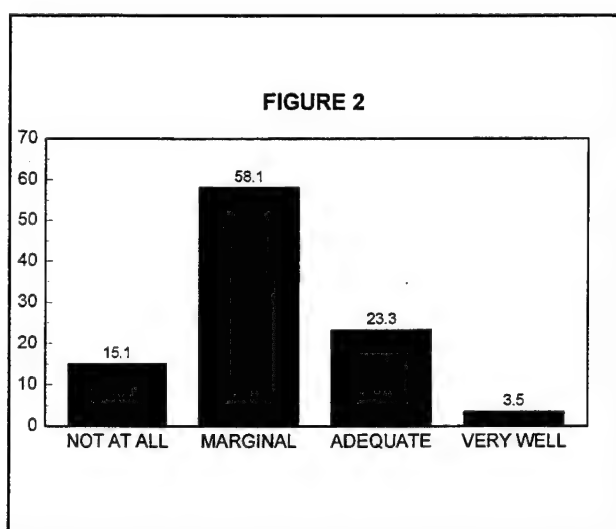
This survey was sent to 160 Army active duty officers (lieutenant colonels and

colonels) attending the Army War College, four division commanders, five observers/controllers at the NTC, and two current battalion commanders. This survey sample represents a wide cross-section of the Army's leadership, with a majority having recently completed battalion command. Response rates were 45% from Army War College students, 75% from division commanders, 100% from O/Cs, and 100% from current commanders. A total of 86 responses support the three primary question of the survey, summarized below:

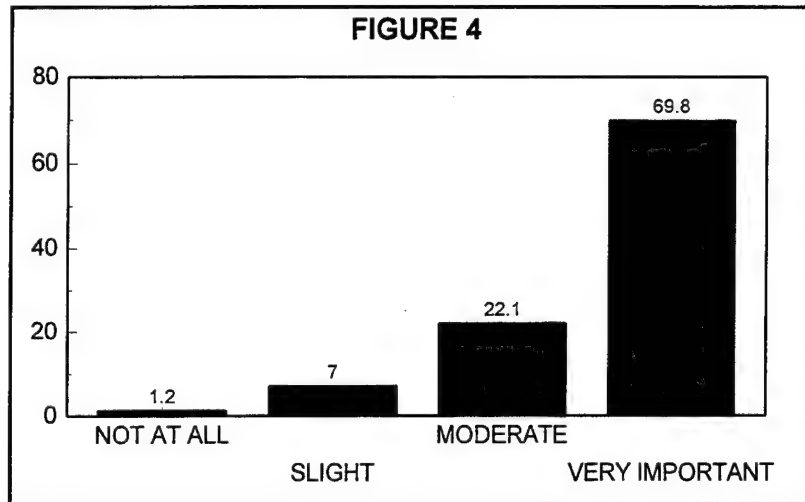
**UNDERSTANDING OF BATTLE COMMAND:** One-third of the respondents have little or no understanding of battle command as defined by FM 100-5, Operations. Additionally, almost half of the group (48%) felt they understood the meaning of battle command, but did not feel adequately prepared to implement or teach the concept to their subordinates (figure 1).



**ARTICULATING AND IMPLEMENTING BATTLE COMMAND:** Nearly three fourths (73%) felt the Army has poorly articulated the battle command concept (figure 2); two thirds (66%) believe we are not effectively developing the required battle command skills in our leaders (figure 3). Over two thirds (69%) were concerned with this situation and the implications it has on our future leaders.



**IMPORTANCE OF BATTLE COMMAND TO FUTURE LEADERS:** An overwhelming majority (93%) felt battle command will have a significant impact on future leaders (figure 4). Almost everyone (98%) felt TRADOC should teach battle command in all professional military education (PME) courses.



My conclusions from this survey, as verified by this group of senior leaders are that battle command is very important to the future leader, successful operations depend on leaders who possess effective battle command skills, we do not adequately understand the battle command concept throughout the force, and battle command instruction should be increased throughout the TRADOC school system.

#### **BATTLE COMMAND VOID IN OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM**

The concept of battle command detailed by FM 100-5 is nearly three years old. Unfortunately, we have not fully embraced battle command throughout the force or generated instructions needed to teach this in our TRADOC schools. The Army lacks clear direction on how to implement battle command in the training of tactical leaders. Granted, battle command has been very difficult subject to teach due to the complexity and confusion caused by the gap between doctrine and the executor. This problem is compounded by the fact that the critical elements of battle command required for

different levels of command have not been determined and required instruction developed for each level. A recent survey of senior leaders concluded that future leaders need the following cognitive skills: the ability to think strategically, conceptually, analytically, and to think clearly about complicated issues and to make decisions in conditions of uncertainty. Such skills are necessary to operate effectively in a complex, dynamic environment.<sup>8</sup>

Several areas of the battle command support system do receive a lot of attention: the orders process, communications systems, and battlefield operating systems proficiency. But the crux of battle command receives little attention. We are not teaching future commanders how to think critically; how to visualize the terrain and the enemy; how to determine a future endstate; and how to effectively translate that vision to a staff and subordinate leaders. Battle command requires complex thinking, but "there seems to be little intentional effort to determine what these cognitive skills are or how they can be amplified in the Army's officer population."<sup>9</sup> Halpin concludes that there is no identifiable program of instruction in the Army to develop more effective ways of thought. Current instruction focuses on knowledge in the form of facts, with no formal instruction in ways of thinking, reasoning, and deciding. Reasoning is too critical to be ignored or simply relegated to chance.<sup>10</sup>

A check of several TRADOC schools reveals there are only two situations where some of these cognitive skills are addressed. Command and General Staff College (CGSC) offers an elective on battle command for select students. As a part of that course, there is a section on "practical thinking" focused on skills that are

important to overcome real obstacles in thinking.<sup>11</sup> The Army War College also offers an advanced course on "critical thinking" for approximately 50 students per year.<sup>12</sup>

The future of warfare is unclear. Even so, we can count on several things. First, technology will continue to have a major impact on Army operations. Secondly, the probability of fighting a Desert Storm II is remote. Further, we can expect a threat to come in many different forms, but probably not a conventional confrontation as was Desert Storm. And finally, the opportunity to learn "on the job" is a luxury we can not afford due to the external dynamics currently facing our leaders. The most significant being the force projection requirements of most units, personnel turbulence impacting both stability and experience levels, and the need for the commander to quickly assess unit capability and provide focus and direction. Additionally, the probability has increased that the actions of our tactical commanders will have immediate strategic and political implications. So, there appears one constant in whatever the future may bring -- the requirement for a leader who can visualize the enemy, the terrain, himself in time, space, and endstate, and articulate this vision. We must strive to produce more leaders like General Lee instead of those who are bound to repeat McClellan's errors.

Our learning institutions must play a critical part in preparing our leaders to be proficient in these skills. We must begin battle command education early in every officer's career. The central focus of all TRADOC training must remain the training of the hard skills required to be technically proficient. But, each level of schooling must expose students to the cognitive skills required to ensure active learning, improved

critical thinking, and intellectual initiative – the foundation of battle command. Such proactive education will provide our future leaders with critical tools needed for success as they continue to grow and mature in troop assignments. There, these skills will be practiced, perfected, mixed with intuition, and honed by experience.

## **OPERATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS AND EFFECT ON BATTLE COMMAND**

Operational assignments are where true learning of all types, especially battle command take place. This is where the leader gains experience by internalizing class room principles when tested by the realities of having to make it happen on the ground. Several years ago most officers spent four or five years in a troop unit as a Captain and Major. Today's future leaders are lucky if they spend two years as a Captain, of which 12-14 months is as a company commander, and one year in a field grade position (battalion S-3, executive officer, or fire support officer). These limited opportunities to develop battle command and leadership skills are impacting the Army in two ways - both bad. First, young officers are given barely enough time to learn their trade, so their tactical proficiency is questionable. Secondly, the experiences they gain through repeated exposure to major events has been reduced as well as the opportunity to internalize and reflect on the real lessons learned. Following this brief period of troop time, they are then off to other assignments like AC/RC advisor, recruiting, or other TDA positions. Perhaps important assignments, but they generally do not allow these officers to learn their trade as a warfighter and leader.

A second order effect of this disrupted personnel management cycle; failing to

teach battle command, less time for gaining experience, officers assuming battalion/brigade command not fully prepared to implement battle command - is that these leaders cannot coach, teach, or mentor their subordinates on battle command. This cycle must be broken. We must attack this battle command deficiency on all fronts; in the school house, at our Combat Training Centers, and in the field with our current leaders. Our current track record of demonstrating battle command competency at the training centers has not been good, and highlights the impact this battle command deficiency is having on our combat readiness.

## **CURRENT ASSESSMENT OF BATTLE COMMAND**

The Combat Training Centers (CTC) offer a unique opportunity to examine how well our current tactical commanders understand and implement battle command. The CTCs were founded with a dual purpose: to provide the most realistic training exercises possible short of actual war, and to provide lessons learned to the Army. They are designed to represent the conditions of war as closely as possible.<sup>13</sup> The CTCs also provide the opportunity to assess training levels of leaders and their units as they operate throughout the rotation. The reality today is that many leaders and units at the CTCs fail to plan, prepare, and execute successful simulated combat operations.

In fact, a sampling of key observations of battle command over the past 18 months reveals a significant flaw in the Army's development of successful battalion and brigade commanders. The CTCs, through battle command focused rotations,

have identified these recurring leader shortfalls: failure to visualize the effects of terrain on friendly and enemy operations; failure to anticipate actions; not knowing how and when to make adjustments; failure to identify key details in an order, failure to systematically manage key information requirements; failure to select critical time and place; failure to control information flow; failure to issue clear and concise orders; failure to modify plans based on new estimate of the situation, and to ensure timeliness and accuracy of information, failure to understand and carry out the decision making process; inability to visualize the endstate that drives the process of setting the conditions for success; failure to clearly articulate vision and commander's intent; lacking dynamic battlefield visualization; lack of knowledge and understanding of enemy doctrine; failure to understand the linkage between commander's critical information requirements, commander's decisions, and the combat functions process; inability to synchronize the battlefield; insufficient knowledge of battle command; and limited opportunities to learn the art of battle command.<sup>14</sup>

Do we have agile and lethal units and leaders with a solid foundation of battle command expertise? A close look at the recurring trends at our CTCs indicate our field Army cannot consistently produce success on the battlefield. And that is the bottom line. The end result of all our military education, leader selection and preparation, and home station training is to develop and produce agile and lethal units capable of closing with and killing the enemy. If that is not occurring, everyone in the Army should be concerned and dedicated to solving all issues which are contributing to this potentially catastrophic condition which now confronts us.

Clearly, we have a major problem with our current strategy of leader development and preparation of current and future commanders. There are many factors affecting this current state of affairs and also as many solutions. But battle command appears central to the corrective process.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To remain the world's leading landpower, our Army must make some radical changes in its leader development process. We need to re-engineer the process, beginning with a change in our cultural approach and attitude regarding active learning, thinking "outside the box", and cognitive requirements of our leaders. While the philosophy of leader development may have revolved around the triad of tactical-technical proficiency, experience derived from operational assignments, and solid cognitive skills, this approach has never translated into a strategy which the assignment managers, doctrinal writers, or TRADOC instructors understood or followed. The essence of the Learning Leader XXI described by Colonel Harback,<sup>15</sup> must spread throughout the force. This focus of future leader development must provide the true azimuth to follow as we begin our re-engineering effort. The results of this effort must provide a "leap-ahead" capability in human performance to develop and harness the mental capabilities required of our future leaders.

Several actions must be immediately initiated to remedy the deficiencies of battle command which this paper has identified.

1. The Army leadership must confirm the importance of battle command as the corner

stone of the Force XXI effort. Seldom is change initiated or organizations shift focus when driven from the bottom. Such change must begin with the Army Chief of Staff. It must be supported, amplified, and articulated by his principle trainers: the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans (DCSOPS); the TRADOC Commander; the Combined Arms Center Commander; each school Commandant, the field Army chain of command, to each company level commander. A battle command "white paper" should be developed which clearly describes the essence of battle command, emphasizing the leader's role in the force XXI environment. It must clearly state that information age technology will not replace the human mind in decision making. Additionally, the cognitive skills required of each leader, from platoon to theater CINC, must be improved if the Army is to remain relevant and effective in the 21st century. The CSA's overt support will provide the required direction and raise battle command awareness.

2. The doctrine writers throughout TRADOC must re-look the battle command concept as currently written and capture the real essence, focusing on the commander's cognitive skill and ability to visualize, conceptualize, and articulate his desired endstate. This concept must be clearly articulated and defined to ensure there is a concise description and understanding of battle command throughout the force.

3. The Army's officer management and assignment policies must be reviewed; we need significant changes made in this arena. The primary flaw with the current process is there is not enough time to meet all the requirements needed to produce

qualified commanders at the battalion level and above. We cannot continue under the current policy. The following ideas are offered to help solve this vital flaw in leader development:

- All non-troop positions must be critically examined and validated in terms of their relevance to the real aim of the officer development process - successful leadership in combat. If these requirements adversely affect captains and majors by depriving them of experience and battle command proficiency by keeping them away from troop assignments, these positions must be deleted. We cannot sacrifice future combat leader capability for near-term unsupportable requirements.

- Consider lengthening the time in grade requirements, through the grade of lieutenant colonel. This would help ease the current time crunch which is preventing each officer from gaining the necessary experience. This is another attempt to ensure each officer is allowed the opportunity to be assigned longer in a troop position.

- As a last resort, consider modifying the rank requirements for command and key staff positions, which would eliminating this time crunch that currently exists, to ensure all commanders gain the necessary experience. Company commanders would be majors, battalion S-3s and executive officers would be lieutenant colonels, and battalion commanders would be colonels. This option would have ramifications throughout the force structure and must be thoroughly examined.

- A significant departure from current policies would be to identify officers at the five year mark who demonstrate the abilities to command. They would be put on a single track into assignments focused on developing experience and knowledge

required of future commanders. This option would improve the chances of developing better commanders by ensuring each assignment is focused on preparing the officer for battalion and brigade command. There may be a few draw backs to this proposal and may have unintended ramifications on the officer corps -- creating an elitist group of commanders and an "underclass" of professional staff officers who may lack critical experience in leading soldiers, and the warfighting spirit.

-While it may not have an immediate impact on the problem, changing the mandatory retirement age of senior leaders to age sixty five could also be another option. A review board would be required to screen eligible officers to ensure that only the best and the brightest are retained on active duty. This option would prevent experienced leaders from being forced out when their impact on the direction of the Army and on leader development is most needed.

4. The most pressing area requiring immediate action is the TRADOC school system's approach to teaching battle command. While the current ideas and methods of teaching leadership appear adequate, the emphasis on battle command is totally inadequate. Our reform should be based on the following:

-Much work is needed to define the cognitive skills required by each level of leader and to develop the expertise to teach these skills. Many different ideas and approaches have been advanced for providing such complex training. Several of our research institutions have spent a lot of time and resources on this subject.

Unfortunately, little of this has been translated into any positive action for battle command education. It is time to formally transform the challenges faced by the

commander -- "identifying and forecasting problems, developing solutions, building workable plans and concepts, making difficult judgements, using intuition, thinking critically, analyzing factors logically, determining critical from less significant elements, and visualizing complex system interactions, into meaningful tools which our leaders can learn and put into practice".<sup>16</sup>

-We must acknowledge that this required emphasis on cognitive training will not transform the officer corps into critical thinkers overnight nor will it solve all the problems facing these leaders. General Lee's disaster at Gettysburg is a prime example. Research indicates that "only when one experiences a failure to master one's larger world is there the possibility that one's views of the world will expand. The heart of leader development should be the planned assignment of high-potential leaders to successively more challenging work roles where a mentor is present who can help the individual better understand the new, more complicated environment in which he must now operate".<sup>17</sup> This significant observation calls for instruction to provide a frame of reference, principles, and other tools required of the critical thinker. But only in operational assignments where these tools can be practiced and internalized will true learning occur. Another critical factor in this process is the role of a mentor, who must be a master of these cognitive skills and an expert in battle command. The task of developing a program of instruction focused on each level of leader development, delivered by certified instructors, seems almost a "bridge too far". But the stakes are too high for further delay. With every day that passes, we are failing to arm a new crop of leaders with the key required for future success - battle

command competencies based on improved cognitive skills.

-The final TRADOC area which must be re-designed is a battle command self-development program which would supplement institutional training and assist in the practical learning process taking place in operational or other assignments. The interactive CD-ROM type program as envisioned by the Battle Command Battle Lab appears to be heading in the right direction. If quality material is used, and the chain of command provides the structure and discipline to ensure the program is used regularly, it can be a success. A series of tests monitored by the commander would ensure compliance; it would also provide an opportunity to mentor junior leaders as they continue to become proficient in battle command.

5. One area which must be improved that has the potential to help correct this battle command deficiency is the area of simulations. A computer simulation on the order of JANUS could provide the training and instruction focused on the leader and his proficiency in battle command. The training session should be structured on assessing how well the leader understands the assigned mission, how he visualizes the desired endstate, the degree of understanding of the interaction between the terrain, enemy, and his capabilities, and finally the completeness of his initial concept. For this to be an effective battle command training tool, there must be a qualified O/C observing this process and provide the necessary feedback to ensure real learning occurs. This type of training can be conducted both in TRADOC (officer advanced course, combined arms staff school, CGSC, and battalion and brigade pre-command course) and in the field with each battalion and brigade.

6. The final and most important solution to the battle command problem rests with our Combat Training Centers. They represent the engine of our training system and are essential in teaching and coaching the art of battle command to current and future leaders. The CTCs "will remain the principal tool for forging ideas into battlefield capabilities and the means to reach and sustain our full warfighting potential".<sup>18</sup> We must continue to assess how well our commanders understand and implement battle command at the CTCs to ensure that our training continues to be properly focused.

-The Observer/Controllers (O/C) at each CTC must be kept at the forefront of all battle command related instruction, doctrine, and training developed by TRADOC. No one can intervene more quickly and effectively and can foster rapid improvements throughout the force than the trainers at our CTCs, provided they have the required knowledge and tools.<sup>19</sup>

-The CTCs must expand their approach to battle command and incorporate more detailed observations and mentoring of the cognitive abilities of each leader. Each Commander of Operations Group must develop and implement a battle command observation strategy, based on a TRADOC approved concept, detailing critical areas to include in each battle command after action review (AAR). Then each senior O/C must be certified on this strategy. The AAR must first focus on the "see the enemy, see the terrain, see yourself in time/space and purpose" approach now employed. But this focus must be expanded to include how the leader is using his cognitive abilities throughout the operation.

These are the minimum required actions necessary for the Army to begin to correct a serious flaw in leader preparation -- the need to improve the understanding and implementation of effective battle command.

## **CONCLUSIONS -- IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

Although this paper may appear to present a negative view of our leader development process and forecasts disastrous results of any future conflict, the intent is only to identify "what happened, why it happened, and how to do it better". There is no doubt the current system has produced the world's best Army. But having acknowledged that, we cannot afford to take our eye off the ball and pat ourselves on the back while doing high-fives on the objective. We need to look to the future. The evidence clearly reveals the Army is experiencing great difficulty in translating the critical doctrinal concepts of battle command into clearly understood behavior that can be skillfully executed by current leaders. Since the Army has no comprehensive education strategy to improve battle command in our TRADOC schools, and since the current officer management policies have captains and majors spending less time in troop units, the Army is producing current and future commanders who are not adequately grounded in the art of battle command. Heading into the 21st century, the Army has not prepared a leader development strategy on par with the Force XXI technology and organization design. Most potential advantages of information age warfare will depend on our leader's ability to visualize, acquire, assimilate and then use critical information, all under the stress of combat. To mastering such

capabilities, our leaders will need more complex and intensive training and greater cognitive abilities than any generation of military leaders has ever possessed.<sup>20</sup>

If we do not quickly implement a thorough training program with battle command as the centerpiece, we may face dire consequences. Our future Army may not be capable of achieving decisive victory - or worse yet - deterring the next war.

When asked about the pressures of being the British Prime Minister and having to make tough decisions, Lord Salisbury said:

the need to make fateful decisions and take drastic steps was not the most onerous task. What I found more difficult was the need to think carefully beforehand. It was not the bold action that bedeviled me but rather, the tough intellectual gymnastics of forging conceptual order out of confusion, deciphering complex problems, weighing the issues and alternatives deliberately, then making reasoned choices that balance many competing concerns.<sup>21</sup>

We must ensure that our future leaders are prepared to operate successfully in the uncertain environment of the future. They must be able to think through difficult situations, develop a clear endstate in their mind, and articulate their vision to the staff and subordinate leaders. If our leaders have this truly significant battle command capability, our soldier's initiative, dedication, and warfighting spirit will overcome all obstacles to decisive victory.

## ENDNOTES

1. U.S. Army Field Manual 100-5, Operations, Washington DC, US Government Printing Office, 1993 G-1.
2. Colonel James Grazioplene, Commander Operations Group, telephone interview by author, 6 February 1996.
3. Stephen W. Sears, George B. McCellan, The Young Napoleon, Ticknor and Fields, N.Y. N.Y., 1988, (322).
4. Richard L. Kugler, Toward a Dangerous World: US National Security Strategy for the Coming Turbulence, RAND 1995
5. Major General Richard A. Chilcoat, Strategic Art: The New Discipline for 21st Century Leaders, US Army War College, October 1995.
6. Ibid.
7. Gary W. Gallagher, The Battle of Chancellorsville - Civil War Series, Eastern National Park and Monument Association, 1995.
8. U.S. Army War College 2000: Army Senior Officer Education, edited by Glenda Y. Nagomi, Ph.D, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle PA, August 1992, (51).
9. Stanley M. Halpin, The Human Dimensions of Battle Command: A behavioral Science Perspective on the Art of battle Command, Army Research Institute-Ft Leavenworth KS, 1994, (38).
10. Ibid.
11. U.S. Command and general Staff College, Battle Command, Elective A308 for school year 94-95 (Ft. Leavenworth Kansas), 11.
12. I contacted the Armor, Infantry, and Field Artillery schools and did a curriculum scrub looking for battle command and critical thinking type instruction. None were found.
13. Jon Grossman, Conducting Warfighting Experiments at the National Training Center, RAND, 1995.
14. Battle Command Battle Laboratory BCFR Program, Battle Command Education Strategy, Ft. Leavenworth KS, December 1995, page G-3.

15. Colonel Herbert F. Harback and Colonel Ulrich H. Keller, Learning Leader XXI, Military Review, Ft. Leavenworth KS, May-June 1995, (35).
16. James W. Lussier and Terrill F. Saxon, Critical Factors in the Art of Battle Command, Army Research Institute, Ft. Leavenworth, November 1995, (27).
17. Philip Lewis and T. Omen Jacob, Strategic Leadership: A Multi Organizational Perspective, 1992 (135).
18. Colonel John Rosenberger, Teaching and Coaching the Art of Battle Command: Intervening at Our Combat Training Centers, draft article, October 1995.
19. Ibid.
20. LTG(R) F.J. Brown PhD, Tactical Situational Awareness: The Human Challenge, Institute for Defense Analyses, 15 November 1995.
21. Richard L. Kugler.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bralley, Neal H. Improving Battle Command Skills: "The Brigade Command and Battle Staff Training Program." Military Review 6 (November-December 1995): 49-52.
- Brown, Frederic, J. Information Age Training: Converting Potential to Performance. Institute for Defense Analysis, 1995.
- Brown, Frederic, J. Tactical Situational Awareness: The Human Challenge. Institute for Defense Analyses, 1995.
- Chilcoat, Richard A. Strategic Art: The New Discipline for 21st Century Leaders, 1995.
- Daniel, Ronald D. Creativity and Strategic Vision: The Key to the Army's Future. U.S. Army War College Study Project, 1993.
- Fallesen Jon J., Rex R. Michel, and James W. Lussier. Practical thinking: Innovation in Battle Command Instruction. Army Research Institute, 1995.
- Gallagher, Gary W. The Battle of Chancellorville-Civil War Series. Eastern National Park and Monument Association, 1995.
- Grossman, Jon. Conducting Warfighting Experiments at the National Training Center. RAND, 1995.
- Hamburger, Kenneth E. Leadership in Combat: An Historical Appraisal. U.S. Military Academy, 1984.
- Harback, Herbert F. and Keller H. Ulrich. "Learning Leader XXI," Military Review 3 (May-June 1995): 30-37.
- Harpin, Stanley M. The Human Dimensions of Battle Command: A Behavioral Science Perspective on the Art of Battle Command. Army Research Institute, 1994.
- Hunt, James G., and John D. Blair. Leadership on the Future Battlefield. Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1985.
- Holz, Robert F., Jack H. Hiller, and Howard H. McFann. Determinants of Effective Unit Performance. U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, 1994.

- Kugler, Richard L. Toward a Dangerous World: U.S. National Security Strategy for the Coming Turbulence, RAND 1995.
- Leader XXI Campaign Plan. Center for Army Leadership, version 4, January 1996.
- Lewis, Philip, and T. Owen Jacob. Strategic Leadership: A Multi Organizational Perspective, 1992.
- Lussier, James W, and Terril F. Saxon. Critical Factors in the Art of battle Command. Army Research Institute, 1995.
- Madian James C. and George E. Dodge. "Battle Command: A Force XXI Imperative." Military Review 11 (November 1994): 29-39.
- Macgregor, Douglas A. Setting the Terms of Future Battle for Force XXI. The Institute of Land Warfare, 1995.
- Mcgee, Mike. Measuring Up: A Systemic Technology for Developing Leaders. Research Fellow, National Defense University, 1993.
- Metz, Steven. America in the Third World: Strategic Alternatives and Military Implications. Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, May 1994.
- Miller, John E., Kurt C. Reiting. "Force XXI Battle Command." Military Review 4 (July-August 1995): 5-9.
- Peters, Ralph. "Our Soldiers, Their Cities." Parameters 1 (Spring 1996): 43-50.
- Rosenberger, John. Teaching and Coaching the Art of Battle Command: Intervening at Our Combat Training Centers, "np", 1995.
- Sears, Stephen, W. George B. McCellan, The Young Napoleon. Ticknor and Fields, 1988.
- Sikes, James E. Battle Command and Beyond: Leading at the Speed of Change in the 21st Century. "n.p", 1995.
- U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. Command. Student Text 22-102. Ft. Leavenworth Kansas, January 1995.
- U.S. Department of the Army. Battle Command. TRADOC Pamphlet 525-200-1. Fort Monroe Virginia: Army Training and Doctrine Command, August 1994
- U.S. Department of the Army. Force XXI Operations. TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5.

Fort Monroe Virginia: Army Training and Doctrine Command, December 1994.

U.S. Department of the Army. Operations. Field Manual 100-5. Washington: U.S. Department of the Army, June 1993.

U.S. Department of the Army. The Infantry Brigade. Field Manual 7-30. Washington: U.S. Department of the Army, October 1995.

U.S. Department of the Army. U.S. Army War College 2000: Army Senior Officer Education. Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle PA, 1992.